AUGUST

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Fitness Forum

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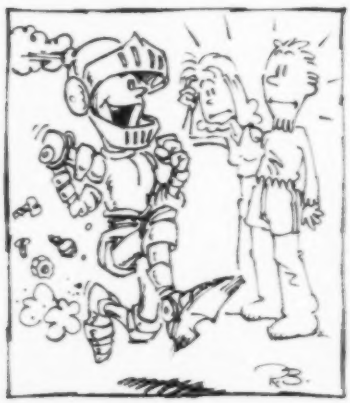
The President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports

Exercise Safety

Exercise should be a fun and enjoyable experience providing we take some safety precautions that both anticipate emergencies and minimize risks. To lessen your chance of injuries be sure to include a proper warm-up at the start and a proper cool down at the finish of each exercise session. Learn skills on a progressive basis; master easier skills before attempting advanced ones.

When starting a new activity, if at all possible, take instruction from a qualified person to learn how to do it safely and correctly. Know the hazards that might be associated with a particular activity or sport including your physical and mental limitations as well as the limitations of your equipment.



Before starting, consider potentially dangerous situations that might occur. Temperature and weather conditions may change dramatically in a short period of time. Take clothing that can help you meet these changes. Try to stay away from high traffic areas; this will help reduce your risk of possible injury. When jogging and cycling plan water stops; if none are available, be sure to take water with you. Take some protection for your skin and eyes and, if applicable, a small first aid kit for possible scrapes, bruises or injuries.

Carry some form of identification, including the name of someone to call in case of an emergency. If you have a medical condition that requires special treatment, wear a tag to indicate what it is. Always carry a small amount of money so that you can make a phone call if necessary.

Water activities are very popular in the summer. They can be very enjoyable and safe with a few simple precautions. Before water skiing, sailing or similar activities, learn to swim well enough to remove yourself from danger and always comply with recommended safety policies, i.e. life vests, water safety rules, etc. A variety of organizations offer lessons in basic water safety and swimming skills for individuals of all ages.

Boaters should take a safety course. The Coast Guard and many boat clubs offer these courses each year. Additionally, the American Red Cross offers instruction in basic canoeing, boating and whitewater. Learn to recognize hazards and unsafe conditions. Wear a Coast Guard approved personal flotation device at all times, particularly if you are not comfortable in the water.

Here are some safety suggestions for other activities:

Bicycling—Always wear an approved helmet; make sure your bike is in good repair; inspect your bike each time before riding (tires, brakes, gears, lights); learn to make simple repairs that might be necessary; and always follow the rules of the road. White is the universal distress signal for cyclists; carry a white cloth with you to use when you need assistance.

Walking or Running—Use well-traveled paths; for personal safety to avoid attack, vary your routine frequently; run or walk with someone or in a group; wear reflective or bright colored clothing when exercising during times of low visibility; let someone know where you will be and when you expect to return; determine the route you are going to take before you begin.

Swimming—Never swim alone; do not dive when you are unsure of the bottom surface; swim on guarded beaches and obey lifeguard warnings regarding water conditions; do not overestimate your abilities.

With millions of Americans participating every day in sports and physical activities to enhance their health and performance, extending common courtesies and assistance when needed will help everyone have a pleasant and safe experience.

HE 20.102: